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the divide. Some of these Indians settled around Frances Lake and Pelly River and remain there today.

Ideas of Christianity had undoubtedly long percolated through the Kaska area from the eastern peoples who were near the Oblate settlements on the Mackenzie and Fort Nelson Rivers. An Oblate made a brief visit to Fort Halkett in the middle of the nineteenth century, but no direct contact with religious leaders began until relatively late.

Around 1900 a Protestant missionary, Pallgrave, began to visit the Kaska. His preaching, which was conducted out of doors, was strongly directed against witch torture, but he also taught a few men the rudiments of writing. Selecting influential men he encouraged these to exert a moral influence on the other people. After freezing his foot by stepping into an overflow (water seeping through river ice), Pallgrave was replaced by English. The latter minister is reported to have remarked that he found the Kaska "too wild." He was followed by Thorman whose son, Fred, is the current Protestant minister at Telegraph Creek. About 1925 a Catholic church and mission school were established at Telegraph Creek. Sometime toward the close of the nineteenth century the Prophet Cult made its appearance in the Kaska area. The movement appears to have been inspired by Catholic ceremonialism and its weak development in the Cassiar was probably at least in part a result of the limited influence of Catholicism on the Kaska tribes.[44]

Among the Pelly River Indians, where the Upper Liard Indians encountered this movement, the leader of the cult was Gušai·š ("Helps the People"). This man was a Ross River shaman who affected ragged clothes, refused to cut his hair, and carried a drum. He is said to have been provided with a piece of skin on which was drawn a picture of people following in a line to heaven.[45] At assemblages, the prophet talked of God and sometimes threw pieces of meat and fat into the fire, also feeding small pieces to people. He told the people not to eat moose feet or they would be unable to use their own feet.[46] He also stuck a small piece of a feather into the hair of every person present. To some Indians he distributed amulets, consisting of smooth flat stones, the size of a quarter. These, he directed, were to be sewn into a piece of skin and worn next to the heart suspended from around the neck.[47] On other occasions he sang from a skin which was shaped like a book and accompanied himself on a drum. It was said that if blood dropped from the "book" good luck could be expected in hunting. The prophet often demonstrated his power by predicting the arrival of strangers. Gušai·š did not care for the Protestant missionaries, claiming that they did not speak the truth. He was, however, favorably disposed to the Catholic Church.

A Kaska Indian, George Steele, who had spent many years in Fort Nelson before re-

[44] Spier, however, points out that the Prophet Cult of the Northern Athapaskans may have been influenced by the Prophet Dance of the northern plateau. See Spier, *The Prophet Dance of the Northwest and Its Derivatives* (1935).

[45] "Maps" of this kind were a common feature of the Northern Athapaskan Prophet Cult. See Honigmann, *Ethnography and Acculturation of the Fort Nelson Slave* (1946), 132–134.

[46] Both the taboo on moose feet and feeding the fire are aboriginal religious elements which, in some form, still survive among the Kaska today. The feeding of meat and the distribution of feathers mentioned below hearken of communion.

[47] This practice seems to have been influenced by the Catholic scapula.

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local white trapper, found the body of an Indian, Moccasin, in the Liard River at Little Charlie Slough, thirty miles below Lower Post. The body suggested murder and Allen reported his discovery to the Mounted Police. When they arrived at Lower Post he led them to the scene. The body, however, was missing. Nearby the police found the camp of several siblings of a prominent Nelson River Indian family. The body was finally unearthed and five Indians taken to Prince Rupert, B. C., for trial.[31]

Witch-fear apparently reached the Kaska from the Pacific coast Tlingit via the Tahltan Indians. Informants declared themselves unfamiliar with the techniques of witchcraft and denied that the phenomenon was related to aboriginal sorcery.[32]

In June 1926 a second police patrol was dispatched to Lower Post "to enforce greater respect for the law."[33] This mission was under the command of Inspector T. V. S. Wunsch, assisted by Sergeant J. R. Paton. Accompanying the party was Father E. Allard, O. M. I., en route to take up missionary work with the Kaska Indians. In July of 1926 a mild influenza epidemic attacked the native population at Lower Post as well as the police party. Sergeant Paton reported: "I find that colds and chest trouble are very prevalent in this district, chiefly attributable to their mode of living." Between August 18 and September 1 the police, together with Fred Allen, made a canoe trip to Frances Lake, where, however, they encountered no Indians. The hundred and fifty mile journey upriver took eleven days. The police remained in Lower Post for the winter. In January 1927 Paton got both his hands badly frostbitten while transporting fish from Watson Lake by dog team. One finger had to be amputated at the joint. Later that season, Wunsch suffered an attack of snowblindness.

After his arrival Father Allard opened a church and school at McDame Creek, where he also undertook a brief ethnographic study of the Dease River and Upper Liard Kaska. The priest estimated the total Kaska population to number about 150, including, he thought, "individuals from neighboring nomadic tribes, namely of the Upper Liard, Fort Grahame, Fort Nelson, and also a few from Fort McLeod and Bear Lake, British Columbia."[34] He reported informants to the effect that "the Kaska Indians were very numerous before the coming of the white man which took place about 1878, the time of the first gold rush in the Cassiar." In 1942, while traveling on upper Dease River, Father Allard was drowned near a slough which now bears his name. About that time Father Carpentier, O. M. I., entered the country and built a mission at Dease Lake Post, while the Rev. Pierre A. Poullet, O. M. I., succeeded Father Allard at McDame Creek.

At this time the Cassiar district was opened to ready access by the outside world through the extension of a northern air route from Edmonton. In 1925 occurred the first air flight to Lower Post.[35] It was ten years more, however, before an air route from Edmonton to Whitehorse, via Lower Post, was surveyed, opening the way for the first weekly mail

[31] British Columbia, *Report of the Superintendent of Provincial Police* (1925), X14; also Canada, *Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police* (1926), 18-19, 24.

[32] For a historical and psychological study of the dynamics of witchfear among the Kaska see Honigmann, *Witch-Fear in Post-Contact Kaska Society* (1947).

[33] Canada, *Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police* (1925), 81-84.

[34] Allard, *Notes on the Kaska and Upper Liard Indians* (1928), 24.

[35] Wilson, *Northwest Passage by Air* (1943), 111-118.

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7:8:45. The final preparations for the potlatch were delayed five or six hours, because Louis Maza had been extremely drunk last night and was still sleeping early in the afternoon. 431

6:00 P.M. River Joe's daughters set the potlatch tables on the floor of Louis' cabin.

6:30 P.M. River Joe went to the missionary to borrow a large pot for brewing coffee.

6:45 P.M. Louis Maza took his boat across the river to bring back potlatch guests. People started to walk up the river road from town to Louis' house.

7:00 P.M. Louis and Joe held a conference at which Louis suggested that both Crow and Wolf people eat. River Joe said: "All right, I guess."

7:30 P.M. River Joe suggested (for the ethnographer's benefit?) that somebody pay Dorothy Plover's grandmother to start the potlatch dance and teach it to others. The woman apologized and said that she did not know the dance too well.

7:40 P.M. Louis explained that the potlatch could not start until those people who had gone to church for the evening service were dismissed by the missionary. [797]

8:00 P.M. Louis went to the guests who had come for the party and requested their dishes and eating utensils. He took these into the house and helped his sisters-in-law to arrange them around the tables. When the dishes were in place Louis began to point to people, telling them "Go in, eat." Men began to file in. The old men without wives sat themselves against the west wall of the room. The soup was brought to them, but they waited before eating until all others who were to eat at the first sitting were in their places. After the soup, the dishes were rinsed and filled with two varieties of canned meat and fish (sausages, a slice of bacon, and salmon), mashed potatoes, and peas. Tea was also served. All the food was put on the plates by River Joe's Taku son-in-law and brought to the guests by Joe's daughters and paternal niece.

8:10 P.M. The cassocked priest drove his truck up to the door of the potlatch house and called in to ask if Richard Day and Peter Tom wanted to ride to Watson Lake with him (the two youths were employed there to cut wood). The boys did not reply and avoided meeting the gaze of the priest. When the missionary left with his exhaust exploding loudly, Louis Maza said: "That's not the only job in the world." "To hell with him," River Joe added. Although the two hosts did not mention it, they seemed annoyed with the priest's unceremonious behavior. [797]

About twenty-two adults and children ate at the first sitting. After finishing the meal the guests helped themselves to the cakes, cookies, jam, pies, and doughnuts which were set in the middle of each table. Sugar, butter, and canned milk were also provided. During the eating, Louis Maza sat on the bed with his wife, who was recovering from a complicated parturition. Children entered and left at will, coming to parents when they wanted some delicacy and then running out again. A number of children hung around the door looking. Most people, when they had finished eating, turned their cups down on the plates and filed out of the building without a word. A few men patted their stomachs and remarked what a good meal they had eaten. As one man left the house he shook hands with River Joe whereupon the latter said: "Tomorrow come again." While people were leaving, River Joe repeated the announcement that fruit was available in boxes piled along one wall; nobody heeded his suggestion. The dirty dishes were removed and rinsed by the servers, assisted by Joe's Taku son-in-law.

9:00 P.M. The second sitting began to enter the potlatch house. As Dorothy Plover's grandmother entered she did a little dance, shifting from one foot to the other, one hand with the index finger erect raised from the elbow. This provoked a ripple of amusement. [536]

9:30 P.M. A few people entered the building for the final serving. Wolf women from the Dease River tribe took over the task of serving and dishwashing, giving River Joe's daughters and niece a chance to leave the house.

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as we have mentioned above, unions of older girls (like Irene Wiley) with unattached men are sometimes so transitory as to warrant doubt of their classification as marriages. 586

Community reactions to divorce may perhaps be best illustrated by giving in some detail an incident occurring during the period of field work. In the spring of 1945 Nitla brought his wife, Adele, and two year old daughter from Simpson Lake to his father's home on the Upper Liard River. Here the couple put up in a cabin belonging to Nitla's brother, John Kean. John had been married twice previously. His first wife died in childbirth while the second woman, Anna Man, left him. Following Nitla's arrival at Old Kean's place, John became interested in Adele and she reciprocated his attention. When the Upper Liard Indians moved downriver, where some of them spent the summer camping at the Highway crossing, Adele and her baby joined them and lived with John while Nitla went on to Lower Post. Here Nitla complained to friends about his brother's behavior. Community sentiment was with Nitla and against John, who was spoken of as having "stolen" his brother's wife.

Although the marriage of Nitla and Adele had never been religiously solemnized, the missionary, hearing of the separation, decided to try both to effect a reconciliation and at the same time give the marriage a binding character. With the diocesan bishop (who was visiting in Lower Post) the priest went to the Bridge. However his attempt to talk with Adele was unsuccessful, as the girl refused to leave her tent and the clerics were forced to abandon their efforts. Since by this time the affair had become common knowledge, rationalizations seemed called for. To friends Adele explained that she had left her husband because the latter did not treat her well. She alleged that Nitla did not leave her with enough wood, and that he often left her without food for several days. She pointed out that Nitla did not even have a tent to house his family. These conditions, she maintained, forced her to live in John's accommodations and to share the latter's food. 586 797

Most of these charges were denied by Nitla, who at once began efforts to secure some food and a mosquito tent. He accused his brother of having fought him and asserted that he did not want to lose his wife and particularly not his daughter. 586

Meanwhile John Kean was also on the defensive. Twice he threatened Old Man with physical violence for interfering in the affair. Steadfastly he denied that he wanted to keep Adele, explaining that he was merely looking after the girl in his brother's absence at Lower Post. To Nitla, however, John was reported to have explained that Adele preferred him and what could he do if she refused to leave him alone?

The summer drew to a close without the matter being settled. John and Adele returned upriver first and again began living together in John's cabin. When Nitla arrived he was given sleeping space in the house but relations with his wife were strained and the couple did not have sexual relations. Now for the first time Old Man began to refer to Adele as John's "missus." In other words, public opinion began to recognize that a divorce and remarriage had occurred. Nitla, bowing to the inevitable, took his property from John's cabin and, in the face of his brother's angry protestations, went to live at Old Man's place. Here Nitla dictated a letter to his father-in-law at Simpson Lake affirming that he had always treated his wife and child well and that he had not abandoned them. The purposes of the letter, he indicated, were to counteract any malicious rumors which John might circulate and to keep himself in his father-in-law's good graces. He suspected that John would take

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by the individual and his immediate family. A father-in-law and son-in-law may assist each other if poor health strikes, but such assistance is limited to gifts of food or casual labor (cutting a little wood, making an occasional trip to the trap line) and never extends to gifts of money. Problems arising from sickness are shouldered as inevitable, but promote considerable self-pity and despair. A sick person is neither neglected by his spouse or parents nor exceptionally well treated. Illness is generally not catered to, and a sick adult or older child, unless he actively resists, is rarely excused from work. There are, therefore, few satisfactions to be derived from illness, although men often use their symptoms as justifications for inactivity or procrastination. In general people do not remain in bed until they are seriously sick. A patient may sit a great deal or, if an old woman, crouch on the ground, but is slow to lie down.

As far as treatment is concerned, any man or woman may assume the role of therapist, a role conferring little status or prestige. Generally a parent ministers to a child, a husband and wife to each other. There is still a residual belief that certain individuals, particularly older men like River Joe, possess supernaturally derived curative power. This belief, however, serves no important function and such reputed shamans are no longer requested to practice. An incident reported by Old Man illustrates contemporary attitudes. Five or six years ago Willy Wiley accidentally shot himself through the hand. The boy's father, Old Wiley, refused to consider Old Man's resolution to send the boy outside for medical treatment. "Fortune gonna heal it," Old Wiley said, refering to the concept of supernarural power. Old Man replied: "Fortune not gonna help." The latter's opinion prevailed, and Willy was flown to Fort St. John, where the injury was successfully treated. In native therapy, medicine is rarely forced upon an unwilling patient and even adolescents are usually permitted to control their own treatment. Thus Old Man reported that his daughter, Louisa, had been prescribed "T. B. medicine" by the Canadian Air Force physician at Watson Lake Airport. The medicine was given to Old Man with instructions that the girl take it daily. "Doctor tell me, 'Make her take it'." Nevertheless Old Man left it up to Louisa to treat herself. "I don't think she take it yet," he remarked several months later.[19a]

The most important therapy comes from outside the Indian community. Since their stay in the area, the Roman Catholic missionaries have dispensed a limited amount of simple medication, and white trappers also from time to time provide first aid and simple remedies for Indians encountered in the bush. During 1944 and the greater part of 1945, highly qualified medical therapy together with limited hospital facilities were available from Canadian and United States Army physicians, dentists, and nurses who were stationed at Watson Lake Airport to serve the air forces. The facilities for such care were readily used by the Indians until they were withdrawn in the fall of 1945. Several times Canadian and United States doctors made unofficial visits to Lower Post, where they advised patients who sought them out. In January 1945, an United States Army physician parachuted from a plane near Smith River, to help curb a dysentery outbreak that has already claimed the lives of several children. When his work was done, Indians guided him out of the bush to the Alaska Highway.

[19a] Information received during the winter of 1948-49 revealed Louisa to be a patient in a hospital far south of the Kaska area.

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box, while two men supported the lower portion. The top poles were pulled free. The man at the upper end of the pit ordered the lower end to be lowered as far as possible whereupon he let his own end drop into the grave, the length and width of which barely accommodated the coffin. The rope was then pulled up. Old Man, removing one mitten, bent down and tossed a handful of earth on top of the coffin. Mrs. Man and Lady Suza followed suit, but without removing their mittens. Harry and Hans then began to shovel dirt into the grave and the other people started returning to the settlement. During the digging of the grave only Lady Suza was tense and mute. The other people, including the working men, chatted of many things without any show of constraint.

Mourning by closely related kin may continue for several months, morning being a time when a woman will feel particularly sad and apt to cry. In time the intensity of mourning wears off. It is, however, often promoted when women are intoxicated, weeping or even sobbing for long deceased children being a characteristic feature of women's drinking.

Sometime after the interment of the deceased, the clothing worn by the individual at the time of death is burned. Any other possessions, such as packsacks and blankets, which are worn out or old and not desired by relatives as mementos, are also destroyed. Other possessions, like guns, files, axes, and snowshoes are distributed to relatives and friends. Good quality blankets and eiderdowns, after being kept out of use for a time, are thoroughly washed with soap and water and reused for future use by members of the deceased person's family. Certain decorative possessions, such as fancy moccasins or an ornamented dog harness, are kept as mementos by a surviving parent, a spouse, or child. A woman may also keep her dead mother's tanning tools. Old Man reported that he could never leave his present home for if he started to "move around" he would lose clothing and other objects that had been associated with his dead son and to which he wanted to hold on. He still used his deceased daughter's silver plated cup, referring to it as "the ghost cup." The dwelling in which the person died remains uninhabited for a week or two and is then reoccupied. Sometimes a tent frame or tent is permanently abandoned following death.

Following the death of a husband or wife, young children may be raised by the surviving spouse or given in adoption. A man will generally entrust the care of his children to his mother-in-law. When Mary Wiley's husband died in the spring of 1945, the latter's brother, Edward Cross, took the widow to his trap line. Old Man explained that Edward did not want his sister-in-law to "run around" too soon after her husband's death. It is felt that a widow should wait at least a year before seeking new attachments. Following the death of her husband, a woman retains his name until she remarries.

As participants of the Roman Catholic Church, most of the Kaska have been taught to pray for the dead. Such prayers, however, are rarely said outside of church services. Following the burial of the body, there is little tendency to revisit the graveyard. In the fall of 1945, River Joe asked his son-in-law, Louis Man, to construct a fence around the plot where Joe's wife and Louis' baby were buried. Following the completion of the fence, he placed a purchased gravestone over his wife's grave. A few days before this occasion Joe accompanied his son-in-law to Old Koon's place, where the rest of the Upper Liard Indians were temporarily staying, and invited them to share a brew. There would be a "little party," he explained, to celebrate the erection of the stone and the completion of the graveyard fence. A

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cent animals' flesh. Some fathers warn their sons not to eat moose marrow, the explanation being that marrow will destroy the boy's endurance and thus limit his moose hunting ability. A number of families avoid feeding their dogs the meat of trapped animals explaining: "If you do, never catch anything next time." Considerable respect is shown to the bear. Coming across a bear, River Joe once refused to kill the animal, vaguely explaining his behavior by saying that the meat was not good to eat. On another occasion the ethnographer's four year old son several times threw a bear paw into a brush fire. Each time Donald Suza pulled it out and finally threw the part into the river. He would not reveal his objection to burning the paw. In discussing the incident Old Man explained that the Frances Lake Indians continue to regard "many things" as "bad business" and added that Lady Suza will not eat bear meat. 784

The only religious rites and ceremonies in which the Kaska participate are those officiated by Catholic missionaries. Such ceremonies include baptism, prayer, Mass, confession, and communion. During the summer, nightly devotions in Lower Post bring many people together to recite one or two decades of the rosary. The prayers are said in English, although a few people also know them in Kaska. Apart from such occasions, prayer is limited. River Joe said that during his wife's illness he had prayed for her improvement. The woman died and Joe is reported to have expressed resentment that his prayers were not answered. During the summer, Mass is celebrated every morning but in winter it is limited to Sundays. How well the symbolism and liturgy of the rite are understood could not be learned. When attending church services the sexes generally separate, men sitting on the left side of the building and women on the right. 796 797 [782] [782]

Many people go to confession about once a year to confess such sins as drinking, swearing, and sexual offenses. The confession, according to Old Man, is prompted by the priest asking questions like: "Did you swear?" and then requesting the number of times that the offense was committed. Following confession the people may receive communion. 783

Christmas is the most important ceremonial holiday. In the winter settlements its celebration is sometimes begun on Christmas eve, when a brew is drunk; drinking may continue for several days. If the people are in the trading post, Mass is attended Christmas morning and, sometimes, an afternoon church party is given for children. In the summer of 1945, a religious ceremony occurred in connection with the consecration of the new church in Lower Post. The rite was performed by the bishop of the diocese and was witnessed by all the Indians then in the community. On the following morning a solemn high Mass was celebrated by the bishop assisted by two missionaries. Both ceremonies were marked by considerable glamor and quite appreciated by the Indians. 527 177 796

Attitudes of the people toward the priests vary, but in general are marked by respect and some tendency to ingratiation. In the case of many people one of the reasons for attending religious rites is a desire not to expose themselves to the direct attention of the missionaries. The priests, who are young men, try to be friendly and democratic and appear to be sincerely interested in the Indians' temporal and spiritual welfare. Any direct interference of the missionaries in the life of the people is resented and may lead to an informal boycott of the church and school. Old Man stated that once when a missionary reported him to the police for drunkenness, he remained away from church until the priest suitably 797

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●797 apologized. In 1944, when the priest, annoyed by the sound of the gambling drum, angrily shouted across the river, a number of people kept their children home from school for a few days.

A Protestant missionary formerly visited this area annually, so that many Kaska have at some time attended Church of England rites. Some Indians were first baptized by Protestants and later by Catholics. The attitude of Dorothy Plover indicates what would probably happen if rivalry between the Protestant and Catholic churches ever developed in the Kaska area. She said: "I go to any church, English or Catholic. I go to make the priest feel happy."

As a liaison between the mission and the people, there is a church chief, an office originally set up by Father Allard, the first missionary in the Kaska area. The functions of this official consist principally of informing the people of rites and devotions. "He call us to go to church. He just stand up outside. Let anybody go in. Then he come behind." The position is at present held by an extremely shy and retiring widower, who many years ago was elected by a show of hands. Only one youth, Richard Day, regularly assists the priests in celebrating Mass. He seldom alludes to this role and receives no social prestige from his status.

REACTION TO NATURE

82. During the many years that the Kaska have occupied their subarctic forest environment, observation and speculation have enabled them to accumulate a considerable body of knowledge concerning natural phenomena. Many of their beliefs, being used to guide hunting and trapping, have been thoroughly verified by pragmatic testing. By permitting individuals to make an efficient adaptation to the climatic, floral, and faunal environments, such empirical knowledge can be considered as having offered the society a measure of control over nature. Other ideas about the environment are primarily descriptive; for example, relating types of weather with certain winds, recognizing varieties of snow, identifying trees with types of soil, and classifying the temperatures of riparian waters with their sources.

821 *Meteorological beliefs.* Generally the Indian is less concerned with predicting weather from day to day than he is in long range forecasting based on experience. Thus it is pointed out that September always brings a long rainy period, snow will fall heavily around the middle of October, the end of November is often marked by a spell of mild weather, and intense cold can be expected shortly before Christmas. These predictions are often fulfilled within reasonable margins of error. In short range prediction of weather, the conditions of the sky at sunset and sunrise is the principal indication of trends. Thus black clouds in the north at sunset promise warmer weather; as Old Man expressed it: "Warm weather, that's his pillow. He lay down there." A red northern evening sky also signifies a warm day. A crimson easterly horizon in the evening indicates a cold night, while a similar sky at dawn points to warmer weather. In winter, when open stretches of rapid water are clearly heard toward evening, cold weather may be expected.

Certain winds are recognized as accompanying types of weather. These winds are not identified with the cardinal points, although observation has fixed the quarter from which they blow. Upper Liard Indians speak of a cold wind coming from the east or southeast;

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159
469 Any strangers coming from Telegraph Creek knew me as a good river man and they'd hire me to take them down to Lower Post.

159
437 A few years later I went back to Fort Liard to sell some skins. Before I went I bought a little outfit. Oscar helped me. He gave me good advice. "Don't trade for credit," he said. "They cheat you every time. If the storeman doesn't use the scale make him use it. Tell him we're going to report him if he doesn't use it." At that time the storeman in Fort Liard never used money. He just wrote and said: "You've got so much." Old Andrews warned me: "If he does that, you can ask for cash." I took about twenty skins to Fort Liard. Old Kean came too. He had about thirty beaves. I sold my fur and the storeman started to write it down. "You've got one hundred dollars in skins," he said. "What do you mean?" I asked. "You'd better give me cash." "This is just as good as cash," the storeman replied. "We want our money," I told him. When he went to the till he said, "I have only two hundred dollars here." I told him: "You're not going to use that for yourself, that's for the Indians." The Fort Liard Indians looked at us. He gave us all that money but said: "You'll spoil the Fort Liard Indians." "Should be all over the country like that," I told him.

159
797 In Telegraph Creek I had met Pallgrove, the Protestant churchman, who baptized me. When I got to Fort Liard I met Father Grouard. He warned me not to believe what the Protestant missionaries said about the Catholics and said the Protestants were wrong in what they preached. He asked me if I wanted to be baptized and I agreed. Later I told Pallgrove that Father Grouard had baptized me. He became angry and said I had already been baptized a Protestant.

159
481 One time I ran eighty miles across the portage from Telegraph Creek to Dease Lake. I started at seven o'clock in the morning and got there about half-past seven at night, only stopped for a little lunch. Cook, when I got there, have my feet swelled up!

159
836 Four years after I started to work on the river, in 1914, I married Nelly. Her mother was a Nelson Indian and part Cree. Her father used to be in this country but went to Fort Nelson to work on a boat. Her parents had moved back to Lower Post about two or three years before. We were engaged for two years and when I wasn't in Telegraph Creek or working on the river I slept with her. In the winter I trapped with Nelly's father thirty miles down the Liard, near the Muddy River. My brother said: "You stay here too long just playing. You better marry her." Then we stayed together in front of everybody. She was a good wife and a good worker. In 1917 we had our first kid, a boy.

159 When I was first married and had only one child, I was like all young fellows. I didn't try to rustle but lay around most of the time. I hunted all right but gave all the meat away. My brother warned: "You're going to wake up yet." My wife then gave birth to a girl. I asked my brother for a hundred dollars to buy an outfit. He said: "You won't get it." He let me have fifty dollars to buy some stuff. We didn't carry much grub, a hundred pounds of flour wasn't high for me. I bought a case of milk and other stuff. That kid liked to eat all the time. My brother said: "You'd better rush." One time I made seventy lynx. That was during the first war and prices were way down. I got about four dollars for a lynx and two dollars for a good black marten. Nelly gave birth to three children. We were trapping near Trafin Lake when she died of fin in 1919.

My mother-in-law took care of the children and sometimes I lived there too. I used to

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Forty-Mile we met two white men, Frank Perry and somebody they called Plasterer. From [59]
them we learned of the plane landing at Lower Post. I thought they were talking about a
carpenter's plane. We headed for the post and built a raft to cross the Hyland River. I was
their guide. In the evening we got to Lower Post. Two days later Bob left me to go outside.

Afterwards I saw a plane come in. There was a big noise. I didn't know where the noise
came from. Then the Hudson's Bay boat arrived with Father Allard. He baptized us all. [59]
I couldn't understand why he poured water on our heads. That was when he took me out-
side to school. I don't remember how old I was—maybe about fourteen.

On the way to school we reached McDame Creek. I wasn't worried. My sister and two
other girls were going to school with me. They were crying, but I laughed and told them
that we would be back again. When we left McDame, Father Allard went ahead. Once the
small boat in which we were travelling almost upset. Father Allard put us on the Hudson's
Bay boat. After we left McDame, the boat with Father Allard and Nelson Charlie upset.
It was night and we were camping when we heard somebody rolling down the river. Big
George was captain. He told his boys: "Go up and see what happened." Nelson Charlie
told them that everything had been lost; they had no blankets and no matches. They walked
down to meet us and the men gave Father Allard a tent and blankets. I started to cry then.

After starting out the following morning we found half of the priest's outfit. We
pulled up the boat and took the film along. At Porter's Landing, the boat left us and Marion
from Telegraph Creek, took us to the head of Dease Lake. We were there a long time. Father
Allard told us: "Caterpillar coming." I didn't know what he meant. Then I saw it coming
out of the brush. I thought it was a big worm. We got on that worm and it made me smooth.
My sister was all right and so were the other girls. When we got to Telegraph Creek, it
looked good to me. They bathed me there and I put on new clothes. After waiting for the
boat, we finally started down the Stikine River. This was the Barrington boat and, right
close to Wrangell, Barrington said: "You tell Father Allard that you smell salt water." I
didn't know what he was talking about.

In Wrangell we stayed with Mrs. Asses to wait for the big boat. Father took us to a
farmer's camp for a meal. Then we got a good supper. After eating, I went outside to walk
around. Then I saw the chickens. As far as I knew, they were wild chickens. I started to
throw stones, trying to kill them, but I couldn't hit one. Father came out at last and ex-
plained that these people raised chickens. That frightened me, but the farmer had a good
heart and said: "He doesn't know anything, anyway."

Soon I saw a big boat coming in. They told me: "That's the boat you're going to get on."
First I thought a big island was coming. Father took us down to the boat at night. I hardly
knew I was on a boat when it started to move. We came to Prince Rupert and saw many
things. Then we stayed for three or four days and then the train came to take us to school.

It was morning when we reached the school. Father just put us to bed in a small room. [59]
The next morning they told us they would give us breakfast. They asked me my sister's [57]
name and I told them it was Mamie. The other two girls were called Isabeth and Nancy. I
kept wondering why these women kept that white thing around their faces. The next spring
my sister died, and the following winter little Isabeth died. Now only Nancy and I were
left, but the next summer they brought Pete Kane, Jimmy Lord, Joe Charlie, and Jennie

7: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1947
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"the maiming of human beings, including children, has been commonly practiced amongst the Indians in the northern portion of this province . . . ."[6]

In June 1926 another patrol under Inspector Sandys-Wunsch assisted by Sergeant J. R. Paton was sent to Lower Post. With the party was Father E. Allard, O.M.I., en route to begin his missionary work among the Kaska. This party was cordially received by the Indians.

All without exception were glad to see us return. The Lost family evidently bear us no malice. I must say that their stay in Vancouver [?] has done them no harm; they all were much cleaner both with regard to clothes and themselves, and present a marked contrast to the other Indians who have never been out of Liard.[7]

The report of this detachment also contains a reference to witch killings that were believed to have occurred in 1920:

A case which came under Inspector Wunsch's notice was the alleged murder half a dozen years ago of two Indian children near Porter's Landing on Dease Lake. They were orphans, the age of the elder being variously stated at 10 and 14, and the younger being 5. In 1920 they went to the woods for the winter with a party of Indians, and when the party returned in the spring the children were missing, it being stated that they had died of sickness. Later the wife of one of the Indians left him and made statements that the children had been killed, the elder one in a very cruel manner, by being tied up by the feet head down in cold weather. No motive was stated but the woman making the assertion said that she had been tied up on suspicion of witchcraft. Inspector Wunsch investigated the matter this summer. Some witnesses are dead, the investigation conducted to some extent, the remains would be difficult to find and identify, the principal actors in the affair are old people . . . so no prosecution has been undertaken.[8]

Writing a year or two later Allard says, "The Upper Liard Indians have the reputation of being addicted to witchcraft. In times of evil or of bad luck they will suspect one or more members of their tribe as the cause of the evil which has befallen them. The suspected individuals are punished and are often done away with."[9]

DIPSHMANTU DATA

The incidence of witchcraft was explicitly denied for the aboriginal society and a distinction was recognized between a shamka (medita) and a witch (*tsilzil*). An informant pointed out that there were only a few "Indian doctors" left at the time of the outbreaks. Nevertheless, at least in theory, a witch, like an evil shaman (or sorcerer, man) also operated on a person's wind but the exact means by which the malevolent influence was transmitted could not be recalled.

The recorded history indicates that witch-hunting occurred among the Kaska at least as far back as 1920. From informants' data it is possible to ex-

[6] Canada, 1926, p. 36.
[7] Canada, 1927, p. 62.
[8] Canada, 1927, pp. 60-61.
[9] Allard, 1928, p. 36.